

## **Lesson Plan: A Brief History of Fairfax County**

This lesson focuses on the history of Fairfax County, Virginia. It includes a brief description of two key historic figures who came from the county and their roles in the writing and implementation of key founding documents in our nation's history. It also addresses significant changes in county population. This lesson could be used in connection with a local government unit or during a study/review of the founding documents required by the POS.

### **Connection to POS: Standard 8.1**

- ◆ *Students will identify fundamental principles of our democratic republic including ...federalism, constitutionalism, and consent of the governed. (8.1.1.b)*

### **SOL Standards: 7.1.b**

**SOL Review Opportunities:** *the Revolutionary War, the writing of the Constitution and Bill of Rights, the Stamp Act*



### **Objectives**

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- ◆ identify highlights of county history and contributions made by George Mason and George Washington.
- ◆ describe and explain historic trends in county population.
- ◆ evaluate how these changes in Fairfax County demographics may affect their lifestyle and future opportunities (career, housing, education, etc.)



### **Materials**

- ◆ *A Brief History of Fairfax County*, Donald M. Sweig, History Resources Information Series: Number 1 (1995)
- ◆ *Washington & Fairfax* A 30 minute narrative documentary about significant events in the lives of George Washington and George Mason. It examines their role in the founding of our nation. Available through Channels 16/41 or your media center.
- ◆ Transparency master: Chronology of Fairfax County History

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- ◆ Transparency Master: The Two Georges: George Washington and George Mason
- ◆ “Historical Sketch of Fairfax County”: Fairfax County History Commission Web Page [<http://166.94.10.10/attractions/history.htm>]
- ◆ Student Handout – A Population Chronology of Fairfax County
- ◆ Student Handout – The Two Georges: George Washington and George Mason



### **Time Needed**

- ◆ 45-60 minutes



### **Procedures**

1. As a bellringer, begin by having students record in their notebook/journal what they know about the history of the county (people, places, and events.) Have them list as many places, buildings, monuments, etc that they can named after Washington and/or Mason (examples may include GW University, GMU, high schools, libraries, etc.)
2. Have students individually read *A Brief History of Fairfax County* and list ten interesting facts in addition to those identified in the brainstorming session. Have small groups share, compare their lists. Note similarities and differences. Note the top 5-7 facts that a majority agrees are the most important. Have students discuss the changes that Fairfax has gone through, where it stands now (especially in terms of employment opportunities, housing, and urban sprawl,) and have them make predictions about what life will be like by the time they graduate from high school/college. The population transparencies and information from *A Brief History of Fairfax County* should be useful during this segment of the lesson.
3. After completing the above, show students the "Two Georges" transparency. Discuss.
4. As time allows, show the 30-minute video *Washington and Fairfax*. Ask students to take notes on the video viewing guide. Discuss what Fairfax County was like during the lives of these founding fathers. How did most people make a living? What challenges faced the community? What evidence can you still see today of these men and their contributions to the county, state, and country? (Refer back to the bellringer.)
5. Have students complete a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the lives and contributions of both men.



## **Assessment**

- ◆ In their journals, have students complete one of the following activities:
  - Write a dialogue that might have taken place between Washington and Mason regarding their accomplishments, their views on government, and whether or not the Constitution should be ratified. Be sure to include references to Mason writing the Virginia Declaration of Rights and the Virginia Constitution.
  - Draw a character sketch of each man that illustrates important qualities or characteristics that they displayed. Be sure to include creative references that would show some of their major contributions.
  - Choice entry in journal (with prior teacher approval): allow students to come up with their own way of showing that they understand the lives/contributions of the two Georges.



## **Extensions**

- ◆ Have students compile a "Founding of Fairfax" scrapbook where they identify the following:
  1. the founding fathers of the county and at least one contribution of each
  2. five additional people who influenced the development of the county
  3. five economic activities that have contributed to the growth of the county (either in the past or present) and specifically examine the changes that two of these economic activities have brought to the county.



## **Differentiations**

- ◆ Students who have difficulty with written expression could present a skit/role play as an alternative to the journal entries on Washington's life in which they act out major events, beliefs, etc.
- ◆ ESL students could compare Washington & Mason's contributions to those of a significant political figure/founding father from their country and present their information either verbally or in writing.



## **Interdisciplinary Connections**

- ◆ Working with the English teacher on your time, teach a unit on biographies. Select key figures from the Revolutionary War, Civil War, current political leaders, etc. Assign students to research their figure and create a "bio-block." Information to display on the cube

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could include a chronology/timeline of the person's life and achievements, a Venn Diagram comparing them to a significant individual of the same time period, pictures, essays, etc. Place special emphasis on selecting figures who came from Fairfax County or the state.

- ◆ Work with the English teacher again to have students complete oral history interviews of some of the town's oldest residents or complete research in the city/town's records and archives. Have the students discuss what these sources tell about the county's story.